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ABSTRACT

In a study of university undergraduates, the students were presented with a list of 17 academic, career, social, and personal goals and asked whether the goals were important to them and whether they had achieved or were achieving them. The subjects were over 1,400 undergraduates in a random sample of all the classes offered at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee during the spring 1980 semester. Of the 17 goals, the percentage indicating need (goal important, not being achieved) was highest for the goal of forming career planning. Minority women, however, were significantly more likely than white women to indicate a need to form career plans. Little relationship existed between a disadvantaged background and need for career planning. Maturity was somewhat related to need for career plans. For white men and women and minority men, career planning needs were negatively related to college classes, with freshmen indicating the highest needs. For minority women, career planning needs were unrelated to classes and were associated with an education or social science major. The study underlined the need for more educational guidance and career counseling for minority students, particularly women. (YLB)

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Need for Career Planning Among Minority
and White University Students

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the Disadvantaged

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Need for Career Planning Among Minority
and White University Students

Abstract

A written questionnaire was administered to over 1400 undergraduates in an urban university. Of 17 academic, career, personal and social goals, the percent indicating need (goal important, not being achieved) was highest for the goal of forming career plans. A high percentage of minority women indicated a need to form career plans. For white men and women and minority men, career plan need was negatively related to college class, with freshmen indicating the highest need. For minority women, career plan need was unrelated to class and was associated with an education or social science major. Other correlates of career plan need were computed.

Career planning has an important role in college retention. Hillery (1978, p. 20) states, "The literature consistently documents the fact that postsecondary students who have not made a commitment to a career plan are significantly more dropout prone than those who have a career commitment." Bragman and Stager (1980) found that uncertainty about a career was one of the three reasons most often given by dropouts for their decision to leave Indiana University. Also, Pascarella and Chapman (1982) found that for residential freshmen, participation in a career planning program was positively related to retention.

Because of the importance of career planning, data from a student survey were analyzed with regard to needs related to career development.

It was hypothesized that:

1. Career development needs would be greater among minority students than white students. Minority students are less likely to have college educated parents, relatives and friends who would serve as role models, be aware of careers requiring a college degree, and be able to help the student to choose such a career (LoCasio, 1967; Smith, 1975).
2. For both minority and white students, career development needs would be less in older students and students more advanced in their college careers, due to their greater career maturity (Super, 1957; Tiedeman, 1961).
3. For both minority and white students, career development needs would be greater among the more disadvantaged (those with less educated parents, and parents considered a college education relatively unimportant, those who rated their pre-college preparation as poor, and those in a special program) (Gottlieb, 1967).

Subjects

The subjects were the undergraduate students in a random sample of all the classes which were offered at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee during the spring, 1980 semester. To increase the percentage of minority students, classes

in the Department of Afro-American Studies and the Department of Educational Opportunity were slightly oversampled. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) is an urban university of over 25,000 students, one of the two universities in the UW system to grant the doctorate. A large percentage of the students are commuters and work part- or full-time. The sample consisted of 1270 white students and 182 minority students (148 blacks, 20 Native Americans, and 14 Hispanics).

Method

Instrument. The research instrument was a questionnaire which included demographic questions and questions about family and educational background, educational and career goals, and reasons for attending UWM. Students were presented with a list of 17 academic, career, social and personal goals and were asked (a) whether each goal was important to them and (b) whether they felt that they were achieving or had achieved it. Other questions covered whether students had heard of certain university services, how they heard of them, whether they had used them, and how satisfied they were with them. There were also questions about participation in university social life and overall satisfaction with the university.

Procedure. The questionnaire was administered to the students during a regular class period. Although students could decline to fill out the questionnaire, virtually none did.

Results

Minority and white students were similar in their goals. For both groups, out of 17 possible goals, the three endorsed as important by the highest percentage of students were "To increase my knowledge and understanding in an academic field," "To obtain a degree or certificate," and "To formulate long-term career plans."

Need was operationally defined to exist if the student indicated that a

given goal was important and that it had not been achieved or was not being achieved. The percentage who indicated a need was highest for the career plan goal, with 46% of the minority students and 34% of the white students indicating a need to form career plans.

Hypothesis 1 was supported for females; significantly more minority women (36%) than white women (19%) indicated a need to discover career interests (chi square = 16.1, p less than .01), and significantly more minority (52%) than white (30%) women indicated a need to form a career plan (chi square = 20.5, p less than .01). For males there was no difference; 19% of minority men and 22% of white men indicated a need to discover career interests, and 36% of minority men and 37% of white men indicated a need to form career plans.

Career development counselors generally believe that the discovery of career interests comes prior to the development of career plans (Zunker, 1981). Therefore, it was hypothesized that the percentage of students indicating a need to discover career interests would be higher among underclassmen, and the need to form career plans among upperclassmen. This hypothesis was not supported; for minority and white under- and upperclassmen, the percentage indicating a need to form career plans was higher than the need to discover career interests (see Table 1). (There were too few minority students for the data to be tabulated by sex). It is possible that students come to college with career interests already discovered. On the other hand, they may focus on the goal of forming a career plan without seeing the discovery of career interests as a necessary prerequisite to the forming of a plan.

Further data analyses focused on the need to form career plans because it was more important to the students.

Biserial r 's were computed between background and demographic and experience variables and the need to form career plans. The correlations were computed separately for minority and white males and females (see Table 2). Most of the

Table 1

Per Cent of Minority and White Under- and
Upperclassmen with Needs to Discover Career Interests
and Form Career Plans

	<u>Need to discover career interests</u>	<u>Need to form career plans</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Chi-square</u>
<u>Minorities</u>				
Underclassmen	30%	46%	109	6.6*
Upperclassmen	27	45	73	5.8*
<u>Whites</u>				
Underclassmen	24%	38%	576	35.0***
Upperclassmen	18	30	694	35.1***

* p less than .05

*** p less than .001

Table 2
Correlates of Need for Career Planning
(Biserial r's)

Variable	Minorities		Whites	
	Males (N=37-69)	Females (N=46-116)	Males (N=323-599)	Females (N=354-698)
<u>Demographic variables</u>				
Age	-.23*	-.02	-.15**	-.10**
College class	-.27*	.06	-.12**	-.09**
Marital status (single vs. married)	-.04	.01	-.16**	-.08*
Living situation (other vs. with parents)	.14	-.13 ^a	.16**	.10**
<u>Family background</u>				
Father's education	-.09	.02	.07	-.03
Mother's education	.05	-.10	.08*	.01
Father's occupation (1 = blue collar, 3 = profes- sional, technical, managerial)	-.18	-.02	.06	-.01
Mother's occupation (1 = blue collar, 3 = profes- sional, technical, managerial)	-.30*	.09	.09	.02
Importance of college to parents	-.05	.06	.05	.02
<u>Education</u>				
Pre-college preparation (student rating)	.06	-.13	-.03	-.07*
Transfer student	-.16	.07	-.09	-.12**
When decided to attend college (1 = always taken for granted, 4 = after high school graduation)	.10	.19*	-.03	-.03
Admission (through special program vs. regular)	-.07	.02	-.01	-.02
Part-time student	-.30**	-.10	-.06	-.01
Education/social service/social science major	-.11	.24**	-.06	.03
<u>Employment</u>				
Hours worked/week	-.20 ^a	-.03	-.06	.04
Occupation (1 = blue collar, 3 = profes- sional, technical, managerial)	.10	-.27*	-.05	-.01

^ap between .05 and .10. (Not indicated for white students; because of their large n's, very small correlations reached this level of significance.)

*p less than .05.

**p less than .01.

correlations were low, indicating that need to form career plans was determined by many factors, and by some variables not covered by the questionnaire.

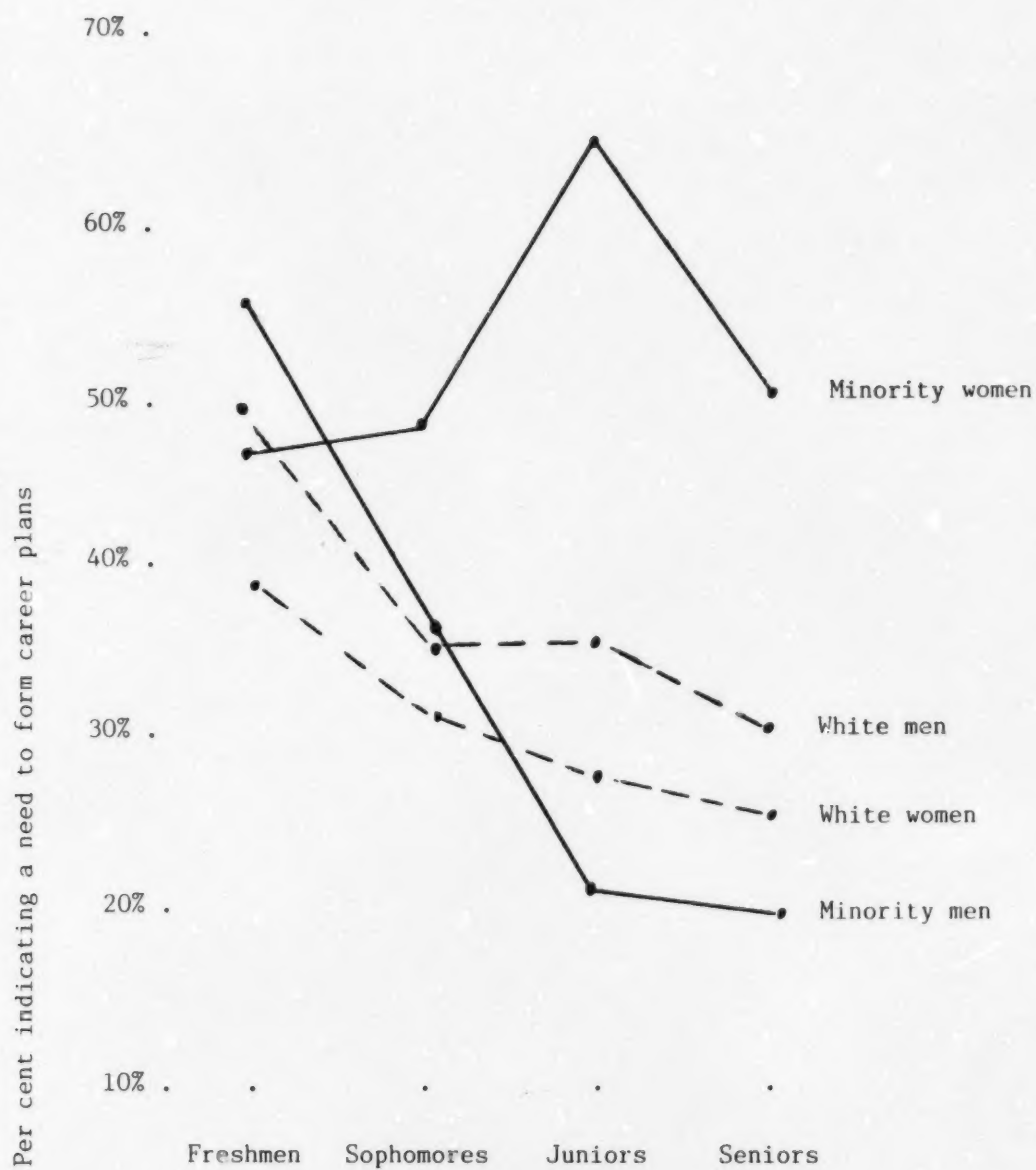
Hypothesis 2, the maturity hypothesis, was supported for white men and women and for minority men. College class was significantly negatively correlated with need for career planning, i.e., those less advanced in their academic careers were more likely to indicate a need for career planning. For all three subsamples, career plan need was highest during the freshman year. There was a sharp drop in the percentage indicating a need for career planning between the freshman and sophomore years, and smaller drops in subsequent years. (See Figure 1.) For age, the results were similar (see Table 2). The biserial r was significant for white men and women and for minority men. Younger students indicated more need for career planning. These results are consistent with the career maturity hypothesis. However, it is also possible that students who are unable to form career plans drop out of college, leaving a relatively high percentage with career plans among the upperclasspersons and older students. The present data provide no way of testing this alternative interpretation.

For minority women the same biserial r 's were close to zero. Older and academically advanced minority women indicated as great a need for career planning as the younger and less advanced women. The percentage indicating a need for career planning was highest during the junior year (see Figure 1).

For white men and women, variables related to maturity were also associated with a need for career planning. Single students, students living with their parents, and first-time college students (as opposed to transfer students) were more likely to indicate a need to form career plans.

Figure 1

College Class and Need to Form Career Plans,
for Minority and White Men and Women



Hypothesis 3 stated that more disadvantaged students would express a greater need to form career plans. It was tested by examining the relationships between (a) parents' education and occupation, importance of a college education to parents, quality of pre-college preparation as rated by the student, and admission through a special program with (b) need for career planning. For both white and minority females and for white males there was no relationship of disadvantage to need for career planning. Only for minority males was there slight support for Hypothesis 3. Minority males with mothers in less prestigious occupations were significantly more likely to indicate a need for career planning ($r = -.30$, p less than .05).

There were a number of other correlates of need to form career plans. For minority men, full-time students were significantly more likely to indicate a need for career planning. The same tended to be true of those who were working fewer hours per week. It is possible that the part-time students with jobs were using college as a means of advancement in their present careers, or that the job was helpful in career orientation. Therefore, they had less need for career planning.

Among minority women, those with less prestigious jobs were significantly more likely to indicate a need for career planning. Also, for minority women, need for career planning was highly significantly correlated with a major in education, social service or social science. Minority students have traditionally tended to major in these areas. However, job opportunities for such majors are relatively poor at the present time. It is possible that students in those majors are aware of the poor job situation and therefore feel a relatively high need for career planning.

In order to investigate the relationship of major to need for career planning, patterns of majors were examined for all four sex-ethnicity subsamples. Minority women were significantly more likely to major in education, social service, or social science than white women; however, for men there was no difference between minority and white students (see Table 3). Also, for both minority men and women, upperclasspersons were significantly more likely to major in those fields than freshmen and sophomores (see Table 4). Since those majors were associated with an indication of a need for career planning for minority women, major might explain the relatively high need for career planning among minority upperclasswomen. To test this hypothesis, class was correlated with need for career planning, separately for students in education/social service/social science majors and for other majors (see Table 5). For other majors, the biserial r was .21 (p between .05 and .10). Therefore, as predicted by the maturity hypothesis, minority women majoring in other majors tended to indicate less need for career planning as they advanced academically. Only for the education/social service/social science majors did the need for career planning remain as high for upperclasswomen as for freshmen and sophomores. Therefore, the data indicate that the relatively high need for career planning among academically advanced minority women was due to the high percentage of minority women majoring in education/ social service/social science, and the fact that for those majors, need for career planning was as high for upperclasswomen as for freshmen and sophomores.

Table 3

Percent of Sex/Ethnicity Subsamples
with an Education/Social Welfare/Social
Science Major

(n's on which percentages are based are in parentheses)

	<u>Minorities</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Chi square</u>
Males	24% (54)	19% (515)	n.s.
Females	49% (98)	33% (584)	8.2**
Chi square	8.0**	29.0***	

** p less than .01

*** p less than .001

Table 4
College Class Differences in Major,
for Sex-Ethnicity Subsamples

	Major				
	Education/ Social Welfare/ Social Science	Other	Total	Base N	Chi square
Minority Males					
Underclassmen	9%	91%	100%	35	10.8**
Upperclassmen	53	47	100	19	
Minority Females					
Underclassmen	34%	66%	100%	53	9.6**
Upperclassmen	68	32	100	41	
White Males					
Underclassmen	17%	83%	100%	219	n.s.
Upperclassmen	19	81	100	285	
White Females					
Underclassmen	29%	71%	100%	252	n.s.
Upperclassmen	36	64	100	316	

** p less than .01

Table 5
 Correlations of College Class with
 Lack of Need for Career Planning,
 by Major and Sex-Ethnicity Subsample
 (biserial r's)

Subsample	Education/ Social Welfare/ Social Science	Other
<u>Minorities</u>		
Males	--	-.31* (41)
Females	-.07 (46)	-.21 ^a (48)
<u>Whites</u>		
Males	-.20* (93)	-.08 (411)
Females	-.03 (186)	-.06 (382)

a p less than .10

* p less than .05

Summary

In a survey of university undergraduates, the students were presented with a list of 17 academic, career, social, and personal goals and asked (1) whether the goal was important to them and (2) whether they had achieved or were achieving it. Responses that a goal was important and that it was not being achieved was used as a measure of need. Of the 17 goals, the highest percentage indicating need was for the goal, "To formulate long-term career plans." Fewer students indicated a need "To discover career interests."

Minority and white men did not differ in their need for career planning. However, minority women were significantly more likely than white women to indicate a need to form career plans.

There was little relationship between a disadvantaged background and need for career planning.

Maturity was somewhat related to lack of need for career plans. Upper-classpersons and older students were less likely to indicate a need to form a career plan, among white males and females and among minority males. However, for minority females, age and college class were unrelated to need for career planning. Among minority men, part-time students and those working more hours per week were less likely to indicate a need for career planning.

Among minority women, those working in more prestigious jobs were less likely to indicate a need for career planning.

Among minority women, a major in an educational, social welfare, or social science field was significantly related to a need for career planning, probably because of the poor job opportunities in those fields. Minority women were majoring in such fields more than any other sex-ethnicity subsamples, and the percentage was higher for juniors and seniors than for freshmen and sophomores. Major field partly explains the relatively high need for career planning among minority women juniors and seniors.

Discussion

The study showed that family and academic background variables were almost unrelated to need for career planning among minority students. Work experience variables were important, particularly for women. These results suggest that internships relatively early in the student's college career might be helpful in career development.

It seems paradoxical that for minority women, a major in an education/social service/social science field was related to need for career planning, yet juniors and seniors were majoring in such fields in higher proportions than freshmen and sophomores. The question arises as to why minority women chose to major in fields where they probably knew, correctly, that job opportunities were poor.

There is a nationwide tendency for minority students to major in educational, social service, and social science fields. In 1980-81, almost half of all bachelor's degrees earned by black and Hispanic women and a third of all bachelor's degrees earned by black and Hispanic men were in education, the social sciences, psychology, or public affairs and services. For white students, the comparable percentages were 37% and 24%. (Office of Civil Rights, forth coming). Blacks have tended to go into education for a number of reasons. Historically, the training of black teachers was a major role for traditionally black colleges (Thomas, 1980). Job security was an important motive, before affirmative action (Brazziel, 1961). An opportunity to be of service to the black community was found to be important for teachers in inner city schools (Griffith and London, 1980). Satisfaction with student success is also a factor (Silver, 1973). The same motives would also be relevant to social welfare careers.

Vocational interests are probably also important. A number of studies (Kimball, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973; Hager and Elton, 1971; Whetstone and Hayles, 1975) indicate that black students express more interest than whites

in socially oriented occupations (education, social welfare, etc.). Blacks are moderately interested in business occupations, but express less interest than whites in scientific and technical occupations.¹

A minority preference for careers in education and social welfare would tend to perpetuate itself; that is, minority young people would tend to go into education and the social service areas because they are more likely to have teachers and social workers available to them as role models than business people and other professionals. Because of the small number of minority adults in jobs which require a college education, minority students suffer from a general lack of professional role models (Braddock, 1981).

These explanations would predict choice of a human service field. However, they would not predict that upperclasspersons would major in those fields more than freshmen and sophomores. If anything, it would be predicted that minority students' horizons would be broadened in college by contacts with students and faculty in a variety of fields, and that they would tend to move out of the traditional minority fields as they became more advanced academically. Further research will be needed to explore the changes in major fields over time. Differential retention rates may be the explanation, rather than actual changes in major. Astin (1982) found that majoring in education was positively related to obtaining a baccalaureate degree, for all minority groups except Chicanos.

The study underlines the need for more educational guidance and career counseling for minority students, particularly women. Many of them will complete college with a degree that offers few employment opportunities in the current job market. Much research on minority college students has used grades or retention in college as the dependent variable. Yet retention is of limited value, if the college degree does not lead to rewarding and remunerative employment.

¹Vocational interest tests are probably almost equally as effective for blacks as for whites (Whetstone and Hayles, 1975; Borgen and Harper, 1973).

Also, the perception that education has practical value, that is, will be helpful in getting a job, has been shown to be related to retention in students with low grade point averages (Bean, 1982). Therefore, career planning which addresses the realities of the current job market would probably be particularly helpful in efforts to retain students. Such career planning is most needed during the freshman and sophomore years.

Higher percentages of students indicated needs to form career plans than to discover career interests. Therefore, career counseling using interest tests should emphasize the relationship of those tests to a sound career plan, and the formation of at least tentative plans should be facilitated. Faculty in the students' major fields might become more involved in the formation of career plans than they are at present.

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